

## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Alpena FRO Accomplishment Report

## Aquatic Species Conservation and Management

### Eurasian Ruffe Control in Lake Huron Waters of Michigan



The Eurasian ruffe (*Gymnocephalus cernuus*) is an aquatic nuisance species that has infested areas of Lakes Huron, Michigan, and Superior over the past 20 years. The ruffe is a perch relative and is thought to compete with native yellow perch and walleye for food and habitat resources in the Great Lakes. Throughout the month of May, Fishery Biologist Anjanette Bowen lead the Alpena Fishery Resources Office (FRO) in an annual effort to remove spawning phase adult Eurasian ruffe from the Thunder Bay River in Alpena, Michigan. The Thunder Bay River is the only known ruffe infested area in Lake Huron and hopes are that removal of adults before spawning will not only reduce the numbers of ruffe offspring, but prevent their spread to other areas of the lake. Many fish are sensitive to the ratio of population size to habitat available. When habitat is limited because populations are high, fish tend to move to new areas. The hope is that by keeping the Thunder Bay ruffe population reduced, the fish will not spread to other areas. Approximately 100 adult ruffe were removed from the river in the spring of 2002. Similar hopes are for a large removal in the spring of 2003. Unseasonably cold water temperatures have set back fish spawning in the Thunder Bay area in early to mid-May however, the ruffe catch is anticipated to climb as water temperatures rise into late May and early June. The Service works to conserve native aquatic species through control of aquatic nuisance species.

*Anjanette K. Bowen*

### Preliminary Survey of Lake Sturgeon Spawning Site at Belle Isle in Detroit River

On 23 April 2003 Fishery Biologist James Boase joined forces with Alpena FRO Biological Science Technician Kathy Huffman, along with Biologists Bruce Manny and Greg Kennedy from the U. S. Geological Survey (USGS) to conduct the pre-construction survey at the location of the proposed lake sturgeon spawning reef. The spawning reef will be built on the east side and at the up river end of Belle Isle. Belle Isle is located near Downtown Detroit in the Detroit River. Construction of the artificial spawning site will begin in the late summer or early fall of 2003. Results of the pre-construction survey revealed the presence of very few aquatic organisms. Sampling techniques included baited setlines and large mesh gillnets (for lake sturgeon), underwater video, small mesh gillnets and minnow traps for smaller species of fish and other aquatic organisms. SCUBA divers from USGS surveyed the site for threatened and endangered species of shellfish. Resources from both the Service and the USGS were pooled to efficiently monitor this site. Major contributors for this project include; Michigan Sea Grant, EPA, US Army Corps of Engineers, Great Lakes Fishery Trust, the City of Detroit, and Detroit Edison. If successful this project will not only be the first artificial spawning reef constructed in the Great Lakes specifically for lake sturgeon, but will also serve as a demonstration of a partnership effort working for the common good of a listed species.

This event provided a unique opportunity to create new partnerships with both governmental and non-governmental agencies. This effort also provided an opportunity to explain the Service's mission and our efforts to restore native fish in the Great Lakes, specifically, the Service's efforts to rehabilitate lake sturgeon in the Great Lakes. Benefits of native species restoration were clearly defined and explained.

*James C. Boase*

### **Second Year of Study to Examine Round Goby Predation on Lake Trout**

The second of a two-year study to examine the predation of round goby on lake trout eggs and fry on a northern Lake Huron reef was initiated in May. The round goby (*Neogobius melanostomus*) is an aquatic nuisance fish species that was first found in the Great Lakes in 1990 and is almost widespread in the Great Lakes. It is an aggressive bottom dwelling fish that is thought to compete with other bottom dwellers for food and habitat. Fishery Biologist Anjanette Bowen of the Alpena Fishery Resources Office is conducting the study to determine if nuisance goby are preying on native lake trout eggs and fry. The study is funded by a grant from the EPA's Great Lakes National Program Office. The stomachs of goby are examined for lake trout fry in the spring when lake trout hatch and eggs in the fall when lake trout spawn. The Service has been conducting lake trout restoration in the Great Lakes through stocking and various strain and fish quality studies and has partnered with state, provincial and tribal management agencies, and universities to restore the once abundant lake trout. An estimate of goby predation on lake trout eggs and fry will assist with models of lake trout mortality in Lake Huron.

*Anjanette K. Bowen*

## **Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management**

### **Alpena FRO Partners Program Project Prioritization and Selection**



Alpena FRO Project Leader McClain, Partners Program Coordinator Enterline, Assistant Project Leader Hill, and Biologist Wells met on May 5 to review potential FY 2003 Partners Program projects and prioritize them for selection and funding. The station has developed a process to review and select projects that will provide the best resource

benefits in a cost-effective manner while ensuring consistency with Partners Program objectives. This process will help ensure selection of the most appropriate projects, ensure sufficient oversight from project initiation until completion and help avoid conflicts between land owners and contractors. The prioritized project list was agreed on and bids will be sought for the work. Based on estimated project costs, up to six projects are anticipated with the funding level received at Alpena FRO. When bids are received we will then determine whether we need to add or delete projects based on available funding. The Alpena FRO Partners Program seeks projects that provide the greatest resource benefits, assures financial accountability, and maintains consistency with objectives of the Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program. This activity is consistent with objectives of the Service's Fisheries Vision relative to Partnerships and Accountability and Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management.

*Jerry R. McClain*

### **May meeting of the Thunder Bay River Working Committee**

Assistant Project Leader Tracy Hill participated in the quarterly Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Working Committee for Thunder Bay Power (Working Committee). The Working Committee was created to assist Thunder Bay Power with its requirements to FERC under the terms of their license. Dr. Hill is the Service representative on the Working Committee. During the meeting schedules and planning of the upcoming 2003 field season were finalized. Members of the Hubbard Lake Sportsman and Development Association expressed concerns about water levels on the lake and how that has affected shoreline erosion. Plans for expansion of a fishing pier below the 9th Street Dam were also discussed. The Working Committee is seeking assistance from the FWS to develop grants for funding future projects. Alpena FRO hosted the meeting. The next meeting was scheduled for 8 July. The meeting was attended by member representatives from Michigan DNR, Thunder Bay Power and the Service. In addition, representatives from Thunder Bay River Restoration Committee, Hubbard Lake Sportsmen and Development Association, Northeast Michigan Council of Governments, also participated. Service involvement in this initiative provides an opportunity to minimize the impacts of habitat alteration on fish and other aquatic species from the hydropower facilities.

*Tracy D. Hill*

## **Cooperation with Native Americans**

### **Preparation for field work**

During the month of May Biologist Adam Kowalski was busy preparing the R/V



Karegnondi for the independent lake whitefish assessment scheduled to occur the last week in May. Tasks accomplished during this time were making sure all gear needed was accounted for and in proper working condition, ensuring the vessel was ready for the water, and ordering needed equipment and placing it in the vessel. A mock set and lift refresher was conducted during the week of May 19 to make sure the entire crew was working in rhythm. The official lake whitefish survey began the week of May

26. The lake whitefish assessment provides data needed to help set safe harvest limits for commercial lake whitefish harvest in 1836 Treaty water of Lake Huron. The survey is part of an interagency effort for implementation of the 2000 Consent Decree.

*Adam T. Kowalski*

### **Independent Lake Whitefish Survey**

Beginning on May 27, Biologists Scott Koproski, Adam Kowalski, and Aaron Woldt began assessment activities in Whitefish Management Unit 04 (WFH-04) in Northern Lake Huron. Project Leader Jerry McClain and Assistant Project Leader Tracy Hill also provided help during the assessment activities on a rotating schedule. Two variable mesh gill net gangs were fished daily at specified transects within the management unit. One gang was set in waters less than 100' and the other gang was set in waters greater than 100'. Out of the 12 lifts required for this management unit we were able to complete 3 transects or 6 lifts during that week. The remaining transects and locations within WFH-

04 and WFH-05 will be completed in June. Data obtained from the fishery independent lake whitefish surveys will be utilized by the Modeling Subcommittee of the Technical Fisheries Committee to establish harvest limits in 1836 Treaty Ceded Waters of Lake Huron. Alpena FRO is fulfilling the Service's obligations as a signatory to the 2000 Consent Decree for effective management of the shared fisheries in Lake Huron.

*Scott R. Koproski*

## Partnerships and Accountability

### Alpena FRO Assists Michigan DNR with Walleye Study



The Alpena Fishery Resources Office (FRO) assisted the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Alpena Fishery Research Station with the collection of juvenile walleye from the Thunder Bay River in Alpena, Michigan during the month of May. The walleye are stocked by the DNR in the Thunder Bay River watershed in the spring. The fish will be examined for the retention of an oxytetracycline mark placed in the fish in the hatchery before stocking. The oxytetracycline produces a mark in bony tissue that fluoresces in a cross-section of the fish vertebrae under a black light.

The study will help the DNR to determine what percentage of hatchery fish exposed to the oxytetracycline provide a good mark that can be readily identified by DNR staff and what proportion of walleye in Thunder Bay are naturally produced. The Service accomplishes its mission through assisting other agencies in areas where needs exist. Assistance provided to the Michigan DNR with walleye studies strengthens partnerships between our agencies.

*Anjanette K. Bowen*

## Public Use

### Sea Lamprey and Great Lakes Fish Were Catch of the Day at ScoutFest



Assistant Project Leader Tracy Hill and Fishery Biologist Anjanette Bowen of the Alpena Fishery Resources Office (FRO) in Michigan educated Regional Boy and Girl Scouts about local fishery resources at ScoutFest held May 10 in Alpena, Michigan. ScoutFest is an annual event that provides Scouts with hands-on educational experiences in a variety of different fields. The Conserving America's Fisheries display, a knot tying exhibit, and native and exotic fish including the sea lamprey, Eurasian ruffe, and walleye captured from Lake Huron were on display. Over 200 Scouts, leaders, and assistants came through the Service's booth. The fresh fish were a big hit. Providing community education and outreach is an important component of the Service's mission.

*Anjanette K. Bowen*

### Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program Presentation at Wild Turkey Federation

Partners for Fish and Wildlife (Partners) Coordinator, Heather Enterline, gave a presentation to 50 Wild Turkey Federation representatives from around the State of



Michigan at Nettie Bay Lodge in Hawks, MI, on Saturday, May 10. Enterline gave examples (before and after pictures) of projects completed in Northern Michigan encompassing both wetland and in-stream restoration, and discussed general aspects of the Partners program. Many questions were asked, and pamphlets were handed out with contact numbers for all the Michigan Partners Coordinators. Following a morning session of presentations by various natural resource professionals, a tour was given of Nettie Bay Lodge highlighting various habitat management techniques employed by the lodge to improve turkey habitat. 50 Wild Turkey Federation representatives from all corners of Michigan were given a presentation describing the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, and the services available through the program. This opportunity to showcase the Partners Program resulted in three people contacting the Alpena FRO with an interest in wetland and grassland restoration.

*Heather L. Enterline*

### **Chicigamee Learning Camp**

A group of 30 fifth grade students from Lincoln elementary, in Alpena Michigan, attended a camp and learn activity at Camp Chicigamee. This group spent two days camping out and participating in a variety of outdoor and hands on educational activities. This included canoeing, fishing, orienteering, and group building games. Biologist Wells from the Alpena FRO, spent 2 hours with the group discussing projects at the Alpena FRO. The kids then participated in a demonstration on seining. A hundred foot seine was used to sample the shoreline of Lake Esau where the camp is situated. Over a hundred fish were collected including spottail shiners, emerald shiners, and rainbow darters. The students were then asked a series of questions on the habitat types for each of the fish. After the demonstration a packet of games and information regarding the USFWS was handed out to each student. This accomplishment provided an educational and outreach opportunity for the local community school surrounding the Alpena FRO. We utilized a hands-on approach to teaching these 30 students about fish and their habitat requirements. They were also exposed to ongoing projects at the Alpena FRO and the different sampling methods used by the staff.

*Susan E. Wells*

### **Lincoln Elementary School Head Start Class Visit**

Assistant Project Leader Tracy D. Hill and Anjanette Bowen of the Alpena FRO visited the Lincoln Elementary School Head Start Class on 30 May. The purpose of the visit was to educate the class about fisheries issues. The 10 Head Start students (ages 4-5) were given the opportunity to handle and examine live fish and see how sampling gear is deployed by fishery biologists to capture the fish. In addition to the live fish display, each student was also provided with a packet of educational materials about fishing, the Service's Fisheries Program and a coloring book. This school visit allowed the Alpena FRO the opportunity to fulfill one of the station goals of distributing information to the general public about fish and wildlife resources, natural ecosystems and programs of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

*Tracy D. Hill*

### **St. Clair River Bi-National Public Awareness Meeting**

Fishery Biologist James Boase traveled to Port Huron, Michigan on 13 May 2003 to attend the St. Clair River Bi-National Public Awareness Meeting. Boase gave a

PowerPoint presentation titled "Lake Sturgeon Rehabilitation Efforts in the Great Lakes". Twenty-two committee members attended the presentation. The two main focal points presented were; current efforts to establish new lake sturgeon spawning sites in the connecting channels between Lakes Huron and Erie, and how the construction of these spawning sites can be used in mitigation cases. The goal of the meeting was to persuade attending members from Dow Chemical Corporation to include construction of a lake sturgeon spawning reef as part of their mitigation efforts on the St. Clair River. Dow chemical is in the process of cleaning up a contaminated section of the St. Clair River and will need to replace dredge areas with clean fill. The presentation was well received by members from Dow Chemical as well as other members of the board. Reporter Deanna Weniger from the Times Herald in Port Huron was at the meeting and summarized the presentation in the newspaper the following day. The forum was an excellent opportunity for Boase to explain how the Alpena FRO is working with government agencies and private industries from both Canada and the US in efforts to rehabilitate lake sturgeon populations throughout the Great lakes. This presentation provided an excellent opportunity to explain to the public the Service's mission and efforts to restore native fish. Specifically, the presentation focused on efforts to rehabilitate lake sturgeon populations in the Great Lakes and the role that the Fishery Resources Offices have in this endeavor. The benefits of native species restoration were clearly defined and explained. The presentation was also an excellent outreach opportunity.

*James C. Boase*

## **Leadership in Science and Technology**

### **Region 3 Fisheries Publication Policy Development**



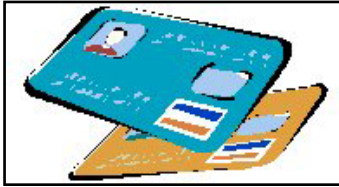
On May 27, Project Leader McClain convened a conference call with a team developing a draft Region 3 Fisheries Publication Policy. The call was held to review and refine the latest draft of the policy and to

seek guidance from Assistant Regional Director Jackson on the next steps. In addition to McClain and Jackson, other team members include Joanne Grady (Columbia FRO), Chuck Bronte (Green Bay FRO) and Rick Westerhof (Jordan River NFH). Development of the Publication Policy will assist the Region 3 Fisheries Program in meeting objectives of the Fisheries Vision regarding Leadership in Science and Technology. It will also provide guidance to the Fisheries Program for standardization and peer review of station publications for improved outreach and agency credibility. When a final draft is produced it will be sent to all fisheries stations for review and input. A finalized policy is anticipated by the fall of 2003 to assist stations with the annual post-field season report writing requirements. Dissemination of publications is expected to rely heavily on the use of the new Region 3 Web Site. The development of a Region 3 Fisheries Publication Policy will assist the program with outreach and improve accountability and credibility. The activity is consistent with Fisheries Vision Objectives associated with Leadership in Science and Technology as well as Partnerships and Accountability.

*Jerry R. McClain*

## Workforce Management

### EAGLS Basics Class



Administrative technician, Debra Turner, attended the EAGLS (Electronic Account General Ledger System) Basic course that was offered in May by NCTC. This was delivered live over the internet. The course explained the benefits of using this EAGLS which will assist in a more timely redistribution of funds. Advantages of redistributing this information in EAGLS before it is downloaded into the financial system is that the paperwork and data entry are reduced and access to information is available sooner. This will improve the efficiency of tracking the office budget by accessing information and redistributing charges in advance of the download into the financial system. This will reduce the time spent entering extra records in the Budget Tracking System.

*Debra L. Turner*

### Service Biologist Attends MOICC Training

Fishery Biologist Aaron Woldt of the Alpena FRO attended a Department of Interior (DOI) Motorboat Operator Instructor Certification Course (MOICC) at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, WV from May 5 to 9, 2003. The primary goal of this course was to train attendees to instruct the DOI Motorboat Operator Certification Course (MOCC) and 5 year MOCC refresher course. DOI Policy 485 DM 22 requires operators of all department watercraft to successfully complete MOCC training and complete refresher MOCC training every 5 years thereafter. Woldt successfully completed MOICC training and is now able to teach MOCC courses with other trained instructors. Woldt looks forward to helping Region 3 instructors deliver future MOCC courses. MOCC training and refresher training are valuable curricula designed to make Service personnel competent and safe boaters. Teaching MOCC courses is consistent with the Service's goal of providing employees with opportunities to maintain competencies, improve opportunities for professional achievement, and safely perform their jobs.

*Aaron P. Woldt*

### Alpena Federal Building Security Program

Project Leader McClain assisted Federal Protection Service officials with a re-write of the Alpena Federal Building security plan in late April and participated in a meeting of building tenants to review the plan on May 1. Federal Protection Service has recently been shifted to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and is required to tighten security at federal buildings. As the station lead for the building's largest tenant, McClain serves as point of contact and coordinator for building security. Al Argillander, chief law enforcement officer for federal building security in Michigan, was on site to familiarize building tenants with new regulations and responsibilities associated with Homeland Security and provided training on dealing with issues such as bomb threats and natural disasters. Other FRO staff participating in the meeting included Deb Turner, Aaron Woldt and Tracy Hill. Assisting U.S. Department of Homeland Security with federal building security in Alpena, Michigan is consistent with Service goals and objectives associated with federal agency cooperation and collaboration and with Fisheries

*Alpena FRO, May 2003*



objectives associated with Workforce Management. An informed and trained staff is essential to provide a safe work place for Service employees.

*Jerry R. McClain*